



Golden State Advantage Bulletin

ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) PROJECT

May 2003



Web site: www.ebtproject.ca.gov

E-mail: ebtoperations@sid.hhsdc.ca.gov

IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: 16 COUNTIES NOW OPERATIONAL

On May 1, Riverside County implemented the EBT system, which brought the total number of clients on the system to over 100,000 participants.

Looking toward the future, San Joaquin, Fresno and Tulare counties have recently completed the certification process and are on schedule to "go live" on June 1, 2003. As such, these counties have been distributing the Golden State Advantage card as well as conducting staff and client training programs. Furthermore, the State EBT Implementation Team is currently supporting 24 counties in their Readiness or Planning and Installation phases of the implementation process.

Finally, the State EBT Project staff would like to thank all the counties for their significant efforts in ensuring the successful implementation of the EBT System.

WHAT HAPPENS IF AN ATM "EATS" AN EBT CARD?

Occasionally an ATM machine will "eat" an EBT card. In the banking industry this is called a "captured card." In most cases this occurs when the cardholder does not remove the card from the ATM machine in a timely manner.

Each bank has its own policy regarding captured cards. In some cases the bank will return the card if the cardholder presents proper identification. However, in many cases, the bank will destroy the captured card, regardless of whether the cardholder requests it back with proper identification. The bank will direct the cardholder to contact the issuer to request a replacement card.

One benefit of EBT is introducing cardholders to ATM technology and mainstream banking services. As such, EBT cardholders are treated as any other ATM user in the event of a captured card. The EBT cardholder should request a new card through the EBT customer service ARU, or if they need a replacement immediately, they should get one at their local county assistance office.

EBT STATISTICS—APRIL 2003

(These statistics are based on 15 counties live on the EBT system as of April 2003.)

- ◆ 167,721 food stamp grants were deposited via EBT totaling approximately \$31.3 million in benefits.
- ◆ There were 1,140,019 approved food stamp transactions in which clients redeemed approximately \$30.2 million in benefits.
- ◆ Food stamps were redeemed at 6,754 retail locations.
- ◆ 97,136 cash grants were deposited via EBT totaling approximately \$41.3 million in benefits.
- ◆ There were 367,632 approved cash transactions in which clients redeemed approximately \$41.1 million in benefits.
- ◆ Clients accessed cash benefits at 4,398 POS locations and 9,471 different ATM locations.
- ◆ Average fees and surcharges paid per cash household: \$2.16 per month.
- ◆ 23 percent of all ATM transactions are at surcharge-free locations.
- ◆ 45 percent of cash benefits are withdrawn at surcharge-free ATMs.
- ◆ 26 percent of cash benefits are withdrawn at POS locations.
- ◆ Clients made 452,069 calls to the Customer Service ARU. 17,905 client calls were handled by Customer Service Representatives.
- ◆ 10,255 clients changed their PIN through the ARU.



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COMPLAINTS ABOUT FOOD STAMP MERCHANTS

Occasionally we hear reports that stores are charging a fee or requiring a minimum purchase for use of the EBT card for food stamp purchases. This is a violation of federal Food Stamp Program regulations. If you hear of such an incident find out as much information as possible (cardholder name, card number, complete store name and address, transaction amount, fee amount, whether the transaction was completed or the customer left without completing the transaction, etc.) and report the incident to the EBT Project Operations Team (e-mail: ebtoperations@sid.hhsdc.ca.gov).

When reported, the EBT Project will follow up directly with the merchant to be sure they understand that this is not allowed under Food Stamp Program rules, the Quest® Rules, and the agreement they signed. We will also send a report of the incident to the appropriate FNS field office and FNS will generate a warning letter to the merchant.

EBT ROUNDTABLE

Another EBT Implementation Roundtable is being planned for sometime in August 2003. The roundtable will focus on EBT Host-to-Host functionality, processes, and procedures. Representatives from the ISAWS and LEADER consortia will discuss the various experiences and lessons learned while implementing the Host-to-Host aspects of the EBT system.

Planning for an August date is most advantageous as the subsequent ISAWS counties and the balance of Los Angeles County district offices will be positioned to benefit from the lessons learned. Even though the August roundtable emphasizes the experiences related to the ISAWS and LEADER consortia, representatives from other counties can gain valuable insight from these shared experiences and apply this knowledge during future Host-to-Host implementation efforts for the C-IV and CalWIN consortia.

If anyone one has suggestions for topics or would like to participate in the actual development of the roundtable, please contact Martin Tenesch, Regional Implementation Manager at (916) 263-3269 or via e-mail at martin.tenesch@sid.hhsdc.ca.gov

More detailed announcements and an agenda will be provided in a future bulletin.

LEGEND

ARU—Automated Response Unit
ATM—Automated Teller Machine
C-IV—Consortium IV
CalWIN—CalWORKs Information Network
CEFS—Citicorp Electronic Financial Services
FNS—Food & Nutrition Service
ISAWS—Interim Statewide Automated Welfare System
LEADER—Los Angeles Eligibility Automated Determination Evaluation and Reporting
PIN—Personal Identification Number
POS—Point of Sale

